



#MeToo advocates vow the reckoning will continue after Weinstein's conviction is overturned

By JOCELYN NOVECK

AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — #MeToo founder Tarana Burke has heard it before. Every time there's a legal setback, the movement is declared dead in the water. A legal success, and presto, it's alive again. So Burke, who nearly two decades ago coined the phrase "Me too" from her work with sexual assault survivors, found herself again declaring after New York's highest court on Thursday overturned Harvey Weinstein's 2020 rape conviction: The #MeToo reckoning is greater than any court case. It's still there, and it's working. The most obvious proof, Burke said: "Ten years ago we could not get a man like Harvey Weinstein into the courtroom." The movement, she said, was responsible for that huge cultural shift — regardless of the Hollywood mogul's ultimate legal fate.



Tarana Burke, founder and leader of the #MeToo movement, sits in her home in Baltimore on Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2020.

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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

SUNDAY:	MONDAY:	TUESDAY:	WEDNESDAY:	THURSDAY:	FRIDAY:	SATURDAY:
MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	EDDIE KROON SINGER 4:00 - 6:00pm MAILLEYN ALVARADO VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	RICKY THOMAS GUITARIST 7:00 - 9:00pm	EDDIE KROON SINGER 4:00 - 6:00pm
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#MeToo advocates vow the reckoning will continue after Weinstein's conviction is overturned

Continued from Front

Also seeking to take the long view, following a legal setback that stunned many survivors and advocates, was Anita Hill. She testified against Clarence Thomas during his 1991 Supreme Court confirmation hearing, becoming the face of the fight against sexual harassment more than a quarter-century before the Weinstein revelations launched the #MeToo movement. Alongside her academic career, Hill now heads the Hollywood Commission, which seeks to fight harassment in the entertainment industry. She sought on Thursday to reassure survivors that progress is real.

"I want those who are saddened by the New York Court of Appeal's decision to know that no single legal ruling can ever match the tremendous progress we have made together in the movement against sexual violence," Hill told The Associated Press in an email. "The movement will persist,"

she added, "driven by the truth of our testimonies. And changes to our systems and culture will follow."

It was, of course, a rough morning for sexual assault survivors across the country, as Burke acknowledged at a hastily arranged Manhattan news conference following the court ruling with activists including Ashley Judd, one of the earliest Weinstein accusers.

In what Judd called "an act of institutional betrayal," New York's highest court, in a 4-3 decision, ordered a new trial, saying the first one had prejudiced Weinstein, 72, with improper rulings, including letting some accusers testify about allegations that weren't part of the case. Weinstein will remain in prison, however, because he was convicted in Los Angeles in 2022 of another rape.

Among those who testified in New York was Dawn Dunning, a supporting witness, who told the court how during a business meeting



In this Nov. 1, 2017, file photo, Tarana Burke, founder and leader of the #MeToo movement, marches with others at the #MeToo March in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles.

Associated Press

Weinstein slid his hand up under her skirt and fondled her genitals.

Dunning told the AP through her attorney, prominent #MeToo lawyer Debra Katz, that she was "shocked" by Thursday's ruling and dealing with a range of emotions, including asking herself, "Was it all for naught?" "It took two years of my life," Dunning said. "I had to live through it every day. I had to live through the terror of confronting Weinstein. But would I do it again? Yes."

She said that in confronting the producer, she had faced her worst fear and realized he had no power over her. And she was proud that her testimony helped other women earn some justice.

Katz said she had spoken to Dunning and other accusers — women who felt "gutted" — reminding them of the important role they'd played in the broader reckoning against sexual abuse and violence.

"They testified at great per-

sonal cost. ... It was life-altering for them," Katz said. "And to feel like this was maybe all for naught is a very, very, bad feeling." Still, Katz felt certain Weinstein would be convicted in a new trial.

"Their testimony was invalidated by the court today due to legal technicalities," Katz said. But "no one doubted the truth of what they testified to, or the courage of their testimony. And so while this is a setback in this case, I do believe that their testimony changed the world."

The testimony fundamentally altered how people view and react to issues of sexual assault in the workplace, she said.

"And their courage has grown beyond this case — people continue to come forward, people continue to support other victims who've reported sexual assault and violence, and I truly believe there's no going back from that," Katz said.

Many advocates saw the moment, however dispiriting, as an opportunity to call for a renewal of efforts to push the #MeToo message forward.

"Today's decision does not erase the truth of what happened," said Fatima Goss Graves, head of the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund. It's important to remember, she said, "that one well known case does not define this movement. We are a force."

Graves noted the fund has provided support for some 9,000 people with sexual harassment complaints since 2018, and has funded 300 lawsuits. The fund is run by the National Women's Law Center in Washington; the broader Hollywood-based group, launched in 2017, shifted all its resources to the fund in January 2023. Burke stressed in an interview that while legal advances are necessary for progress, "the judicial system has never been a friend of survivors. And

so it's the reason why we need movements, because movements have historically been what has pushed the legal system to do the right thing."

Burke said she spent the morning speaking to accusers, including actor Anna-Bella Sciorra, who testified at the 2020 trial that Weinstein raped her.

"I can understand how devastating and disgusted and angry, just the range of emotions that so many of them must feel," Burke said. "And I hope they understand for those of us survivors who will likely never see a day in court, that they are still heroes to us."

Burke, who has spoken out about her own past as a survivor of abuse, added she could never imagine facing her own perpetrator in court.

"So just the fact that they got to do that, to bring a person, a man like Harvey Weinstein to account for his crimes, is incredible," she said. □

U.S. postpones decision on aid to Israeli army battalion accused of abuses against Palestinians

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, FAR-NOUSH AMIRI and MATTHEW LEE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken has determined that an Israeli army battalion committed grave human-rights abuses against Palestinians in the West Bank before the war in Gaza. But he said in a letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson that he is postponing a decision on blocking aid to the unit to give Israel more time to right the wrongdoing.

The undated letter, obtained by The Associated Press on Friday, defers a decision on whether to withhold U.S. assistance to an Israeli military unit for the first time over its treatment of Palestinians and its compliance with international and human rights law. Israeli leaders, anticipating the U.S. decision this week, have angrily protested any such aid restrictions.

News of the delay comes with Blinken once again headed to Israel. An Israeli foreign ministry official told The Associated Press that



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks during a press conference at the U.S. Embassy in China, Friday, April 26, 2024, in Beijing, China.

Blinken was visiting on Tuesday, the latest of multiple trips he and other top U.S. officials have made since the war in Gaza began. Blinken stressed in his letter that overall U.S. military support for Israel's defense against Hamas and other threats would not be affected by the State Department's eventual decision

on the one unit. Johnson was instrumental this week in muscling through White House-backed legislation providing \$26 billion in additional funds for Israel's defense and for relief of the growing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. The Biden administration is facing a decision on the aid as protests and coun-

terprotests over American military support for Israel's war against Hamas are roiling U.S. college campuses as well as election-year politics at home and relations abroad. The U.S. declaration concerns a single Israeli unit and its actions against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank before Israel's war

with Hamas in Gaza began in October. While the unit is not identified in Blinken's letter, it is believed to be the Netzah Yehuda, which has historically been based in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The unit and some of its members have been linked to abuses of civilians in the Palestinian territory, including the death of a 78-year-old Palestinian American man after his detention by the battalion's forces in 2022.

The Israeli army announced in 2022 that the unit was being redeployed to the Golan Heights near the Syrian and Lebanese borders. More recently, its soldiers were moved to Gaza to fight in the war against Hamas.

Blinken said the Israeli government has so far not adequately addressed the abuses by the military unit. But "the Israeli government has presented new information regarding the status of the unit and we will engage on identifying a path to effective remediation for this unit," he wrote. □

140,000 people did their taxes with the free IRS direct file pilot. But program's future is unclear

By FATIMA HUSSEIN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The IRS said Friday that more than 140,000 taxpayers filed their taxes through its new direct file pilot program and participants saved roughly \$5.6 million in fees they would have otherwise spent with commercial tax preparation companies.

The government pilot program, rolled out this tax season in 12 states, allows people with very simple W-2s to calculate and submit their returns directly to the IRS for free. Those using the program claimed more than \$90 million in refunds, the IRS said.

But despite what IRS and Treasury Department officials said was a successful rollout, they aren't saying

yet whether the program will be available next year for more taxpayers. They say they need to evaluate the data on whether building out the program is feasible. "We will take time to analyze the data and collect feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders before making a decision about direct file's future," IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel said on a call with reporters.

The program, which became available to the public on March 8, cost roughly \$10.5 million for technology and product development and another \$2.4 million for customer service, cloud computing and user authentication.

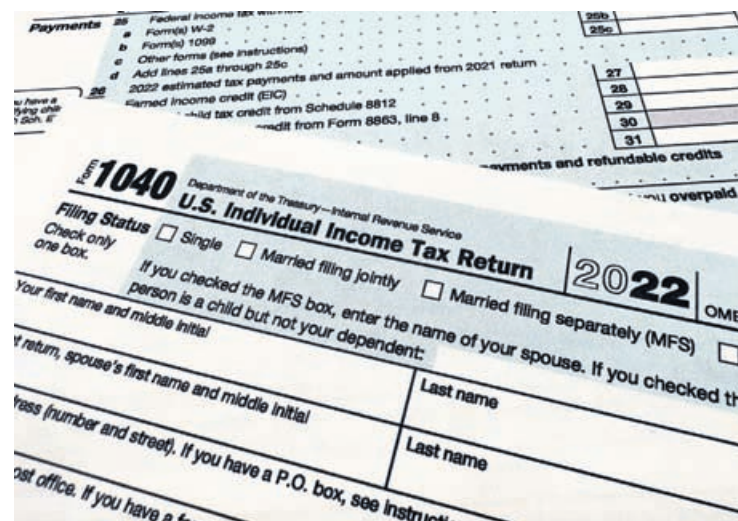
While the Treasury set a goal of reaching 100,000

users for the pilot, 140,803 completed their taxes using the program. More than 3 million people used the IRS' eligibility tracker to see if they could use the program, and 423,450 people logged into the program.

"Regardless of where it goes from here, I am proud of the success of the direct file pilot," Werfel said.

The tax season began on Jan. 29, and the filing deadline for most people was April 15.

The program was available to certain taxpayers in Florida, New Hampshire, Nevada, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington and Wyoming. Four other states that have a state income tax also were part of the pilot program: Arizona, Massachusetts, California



The Internal Revenue Service 1040 tax form for 2022 is seen on April 17, 2023.

Associated Press

and New York. In those four, state tax agencies helped people directly file their state taxes as well. According to the latest IRS data, this tax season the agency has received 119.5

million returns, compared with 117.3 million received in the same timeframe last year. Refunds this tax season add up to \$220 billion, compared with \$215 billion last year. □

Athletes tied to Iowa gambling sting seek damages in civil lawsuit against state and investigators

By **ERIC OLSON**

AP College Football Writer

Attorneys for more than two dozen Iowa and Iowa State athletes who were ensnared in a state gambling sting filed a civil lawsuit Friday seeking unspecified monetary damages from the state and its public safety and criminal investigation agencies for violating the athletes' rights and smearing their reputations. The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Des Moines and names as plaintiffs 17 athletes from Iowa, eight from Iowa State and one from Ellsworth Community College. They request a jury trial.

Most of the athletes who faced criminal charges connected to the 2023 investigation agreed to plead guilty to underage gambling and pay a fine and in return had a count of identity theft dismissed. But Iowa State football players Isaiah Lee, Jirehl Brock and Enyi Uwazurike and wrestler Paniro Johnson did not accept plea deals and in March had all charges against them dropped because the Division of Criminal Investigation was found to have misused tracking software that detected open mobile bet-



Iowa Dept. of Public Safety Commissioner Stephan Bayens speaks during a news conference about the Iowa National Guard and Iowa Department of Public Safety deployment to the southern border, Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2023, in Des Moines, Iowa.

ting apps on cell phones in ISU athletic facilities.

The civil suit, filed by Des Moines attorneys Van Plumb and Matthew Boles, alleges improper conduct by investigators violated the athletes' fourth and 14th amendment rights and caused them pain, suffering, mental anguish, humiliation and damage to their personal reputations. The Department of Public Safety, which oversees the DCI, and Attorney Gen-

eral's Office declined to comment.

The lawsuit said the investigators, specifically, violated their constitutional rights to be free from a warrantless search and unreasonable seizure and that the investigators were not properly trained by the state, particularly in the appropriate use of Kibana tracking software produced by Canada-based GeoComply.

"The lives of these young men have been disrupted

and altered in way still yet to be fully seen," the athletes' attorneys said in a statement. "Many of them have had their athletic careers ended, due to the State of Iowa's unconstitutional use of GeoComply's Kibana software. It is our hope that through the civil action we can help these young men put their lives back on track and gain a measure of justice for the violation of their rights."

The athletes are asking for

Associated Press

punitive damages on top of compensatory damages and attorney fees.

Among the defendants are Department of Public Safety commissioner Stephan Bayens, DCI director Paul Feddersen, DCI assistant director David Jobes, DCI special agent for sports wagering Troy Nelson and special agent Brian Sanger. Sanger's initial investigation involved athletes at Iowa and later was expanded to Iowa State.

Details weren't available for the Ellsworth CC athlete's involvement; he is not listed in electronic court records.

The DPS had issued a statement on Jan. 31 that said it believed its investigation would stand up to legal scrutiny. Defense attorneys contended that was disingenuous because GeoComply, which produces the tracking software, days earlier had terminated DCI's access to the tool after an investigator had violated the user agreement. The software that discovered the open betting apps and ultimately identified the athletes was used in spite of there never having been a complaint about illegal sports wagering or match fixing. □

17 states challenge federal rules entitling workers to accommodations for abortion

By **ANDREW DeMILLO**

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Republican attorneys general from 17 states filed a

lawsuit Thursday challenging new federal rules entitling workers to time off and other accommodations for abortions, calling the rules

an illegal interpretation of a 2022 federal law.

The lawsuit led by Tennessee and Arkansas comes since finalized federal regulations were published April 15 to provide guidance for employers and workers on how to implement the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. The language means workers can ask for time off to obtain an abortion and recover from the procedure.

The rules, which the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission adopted on a 3-2 vote along party lines, will go into effect June 18. The lawsuit filed in federal

court in Arkansas argues the regulations go beyond the scope of the 2022 law that passed with bipartisan support.

"This is yet another attempt by the Biden administration to force through administrative fiat what it cannot get passed through Congress," Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin said in a statement. "Under this radical interpretation of the PWFA, business owners will face federal lawsuits if they don't accommodate employees' abortions, even if those abortions are illegal under state law."

An EEOC spokesperson re-

ferred questions to the Justice Department, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A Better Balance, one of the most vocal advocates for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, called the lawsuit a baseless attack on the law's protections.

"This lawsuit represents a bad faith effort to politicize what is a vital protection for the health and economic security of millions of families, and a continuation of the alarming attacks on women's health and reproductive choice," Dina Bakst, the group's co-president, said in a statement. □



An exam room is seen inside Planned Parenthood on March 10, 2023.

Associated Press

Ukraine is putting pressure on fighting-age men outside the country as it tries to replenish forces

By JILL LAWLESS and
ILLIA NOVIKOV

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Even as Ukraine works to get much-needed arms from a huge U.S. aid package to the front line, its government is seeking to reverse the drain of its potential soldiers, announcing that men of conscription age will no longer be able to renew passports from outside Ukraine.

The Cabinet of Ministers said late Wednesday that men between 18 and 60 years old who are deemed fit for military service will only be able to replace their passports inside Ukraine.

Millions of Ukrainians have fled the country since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, mostly to neighboring European countries. The European Union's statistics agency, Eurostat, says 4.3 million Ukrainians are living in EU countries, 860,000 of them men 18 years of age or older.

The defense minister of Poland, home to one of the biggest Ukrainian diasporas, said the country was ready to help "in ensuring



A Ukrainian serviceman from Code 9.2 unit known by call sign Mamay attaches drop bomb to a drone in the trenches at the frontline, few kilometres from Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, Tuesday, April 23, 2024.

that those who are subject to compulsory military service go to Ukraine," though he did not specify how.

Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said "Ukrainian citizens have obligations towards the state."

The move has met with some criticism inside Ukraine.

Opposition lawmaker

Ivanna Klympush-Tsyntsadze, who heads the Parliamentary Committee for Ukraine's European Integration, said denying military-age men access to consular services could lead to "well-founded" legal challenges at the European Court of Human Rights.

"I think that these actions

will only push an enormous number of Ukrainians to look for different ways to obtain citizenship from other countries," she said.

Russia's population of almost 150 million dwarfs Ukraine's 38 million, and Moscow can draw on a much bigger army. Earlier this month, Ukraine lowered the conscription age from

Associated Press

27 to 25 in an effort to bolster the size of its military.

Oleksandr Pavlichenko, executive director of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, said the measure was a violation of individual rights and also unlikely to succeed in getting Ukrainian men to return home from abroad.

"It's just an emotional step, not a legal one," he said. "It will not bring the results."

Ukraine is in need of fresh troops to bolster forces in the south and east, where Russia is pressing forward with its efforts to take ground from outnumbered and outgunned troops.

The U.S. is sending \$61 billion in new U.S. military aid, a lifeline for Kyiv's armed forces in their more than two-year war with Russia. President Joe Biden signed into law the aid package on Wednesday.

U.S. officials also confirmed Wednesday that the United States last month secretly sent Ukraine a number of long-range missiles that Kyiv has urgently sought so that its forces can hit Russian forces well behind the front lines. □

Outgoing Dutch prime minister visits Turkey's Erdogan in his bid for the NATO chief position

By ROBERT BADENDIECK

Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — The Netherlands' outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte was in Turkey on Friday, seeking support from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the Dutch official's bid for the position of NATO secretary general.

Incumbent NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, a former Norwegian prime minister who has been NATO's top civilian official since 2014, is nearing the end of his term. His mandate had been extended several times as the alliance needed to keep a steady hand at the helm after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. NATO members Turkey and Hungary had ear-

lier expressed reservations about Rutte's candidacy. During his Friday visit, Rutte spoke at a joint news conference with Erdogan.

The southern wing of NATO "needs Turkey and its leadership," Rutte said, describing Ankara as a very influential actor in the region and a geopolitical power. Erdogan made no commitments on who Turkey's would support or say what Ankara's position was.

"No one should have any doubt that we will make our decision within the framework of strategic wisdom and equity," Erdogan said.

He added that an ideal candidate for the post of NATO chief would "ensure solidarity within the alliance

and order among the allies" and also "prioritize the preservation of NATO's essential position in ensuring Euro-Atlantic security."

However, at the end of the news conference, Erdogan wished Rutte success and smiled at him. The exchange also drew a smile from Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan.

NATO officials and envoys want the nomination for Stoltenberg's successor wrapped up by the end of April, before competition for top European Union jobs begins in earnest around the June 6-9 elections. They are also keen to avoid having the potentially divisive issue mar the alliance's 75th anniversary summit in Washington in July.

NATO chiefs are responsible for chairing meetings and guiding sometimes delicate consultations among

member countries. They also are tasked with speaking on behalf of all member nations with one voice. □



Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, center, looks up at Netherlands' Prime Minister Mark Rutte and French President Emmanuel Macron during a round table meeting at an EU summit in Brussels, Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

Associated Press

New leaders take on Haiti's chaos as those living in fear demand swift solutions to gang violence

By **DÁNICA COTO**

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

(AP) — It has been only a day since the transitional presidential council was installed in Haiti, and the list of demands on the Caribbean nation's new leaders is rapidly growing. Haitians want security, food, jobs — and they want them now. The members of the council, tasked with bringing political stability to Haiti, are under immense pressure to produce quick results, despite a deep-seated crisis that has been years in the making.

Making Haiti safer is a priority. More than 2,500 people were killed or injured from January to March alone, and more than 90,000 have fled the capital of Port-au-Prince so far this year amid relentless gang violence.

"The task is really monumental," said Robert Fatton, a Haitian politics expert at the University of Virginia. Gangs have burned police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that has been closed since early March, and stormed the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

Gangs now control 80% of



Interim Prime Minister Michel Patrick Boisvert, center, is flanked by transitional council members during an installation ceremony, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, April 25, 2024.

Port-au-Prince, and though they have long depended on powerful politicians and the country's economic elite for their survival, they are increasingly becoming self-sufficient.

"How you extricate yourself from that is very complicated," Fatton said. "I don't expect the presidential council to come up with a solution."

However, the council could push for disarmament and

find ways to ease poverty in the slums, he added. "Those gangs are simply not going to go away by simply saying, 'We want you to be nice guys'."

The nine-member council acknowledged the challenges it faces after it was sworn in early Thursday at the National Palace, located in an area in downtown Port-au-Prince that has been under attack by gangs in recent weeks.

Gunfire erupted during the ceremony as some officials looked around the room. Hours later, the new interim prime minister, Michel Boisvert, addressed the council.

"The task ahead is daunting," Boisvert said. "I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the population expects a lot from you ... everything becomes a priority alongside security." How exactly the council

Associated Press

plans to tackle the daunting tasks is unclear. Its members have met behind closed doors with top government officials as they prepare to choose a new prime minister, a Cabinet and a provisional electoral commission. They will also establish a national security council.

However, no strategy to quell gang violence has been publicly announced. Several council members did not return messages seeking comment on Friday.

After the swearing-in ceremony, curious pedestrians slowed down as they passed by the building of the prime minister's office. Some were openly displeased. "Thieves and gangs! That's all they are!" yelled a man as he drove past on his motorcycle.

There wasn't much hope at a crowded makeshift shelter set up at Haiti's former Ministry of Communications a building the government had abandoned due to gang violence.

Rose Hippolite, 66, was forced to flee her Port-au-Prince home with her four children after gangs raided their neighborhood. □

Guatemalan prosecutors raid offices of Save the Children charity

Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) —

Guatemalan prosecutors raided the offices of the

charity Save the Children on Thursday, citing a complaint alleging the violation of migrant children's rights.



Police agents stand guard on the perimeters of the Save the Children's headquarters as agents from the Attorney General's office wind up their raid, in Guatemala City, Thursday, April 25, 2024.

Associated Press

Prosecutor Rafael Curruchiche said in a video to media that the complaint filed by an unidentified foreigner had raised serious concerns because it involved allegations of abuse of children.

The raid came a week after the secretary general of Guatemala's Public Ministry, Ángel Pineda, wrote a letter to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton asking for support in addressing allegations that Save the Children and other aid groups "could be participating in child trafficking operations."

Curruchiche said the raid was intended to search for any documents that might support the accusations.

The prosecutor's office did not say whether Paxton responded to the request.

Curruchiche and Pineda have been accused of trying to undermine the country's democracy by participating in a failed effort to prevent anti-corruption President Bernardo Arévalo from taking power as well as hindering the anti-corruption fight in the Central American nation. Those efforts have led to more than 40 countries sanctioning them, including the United States and the European Union.

The raid comes amid historic levels of migration to the United States, in which Guatemala has been both a country that people mi-

grate from and a transit route that they use on their way north.

Save the Children, which is dedicated to caring for children in crisis zones, has been working in Guatemala since 1976. It did not comment on Thursday's raid, but it issued a statement last week indicating it was aware of the allegations saying it has no evidence the allegations are true.

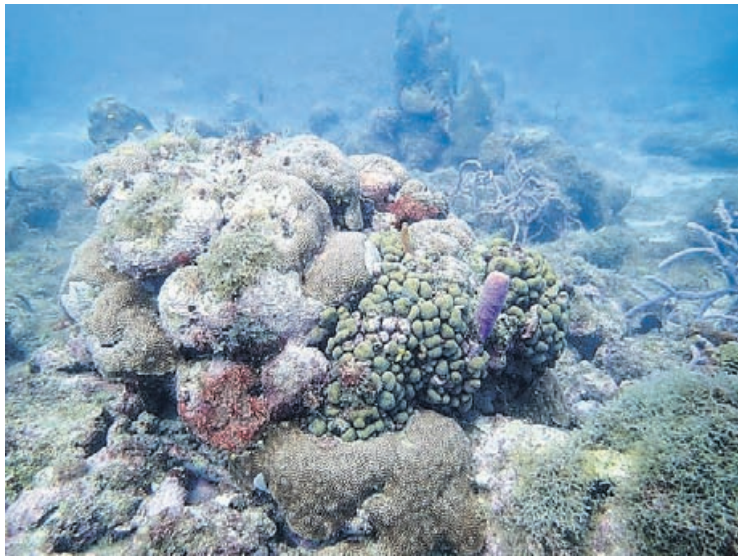
"We take the allegations of children's safety and misconduct very seriously and have independent investigative mechanisms in place to investigate thoroughly," the charity's statement said. □

Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!

(Oranjestad)—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.

On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research faculty

at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Prof. dr. Gianfranco Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health and formation patterns of these coral reefs, and to investigate how these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather, like hurricanes and tsunamis.



Through underwater and land surveillance, and 3D models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They were also able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years, and the effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times in the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and rare remnant of geological history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed.

This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are able to take concrete action in protecting and preserving our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen! ☐

Birds of Aruba



ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation will focus on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and



descriptions from the foundations Facebook page.

The Great Egret

Serenity in Aruba's National Park, a Great Egret flying in peace. When it is peaceful and quite, beautiful things start happening in nature.

Canadian in the house

The breeding season is over and it's getting pretty cold in North America. Shore birds have started moving southwards as early as July. This wetland beauty wants to keep its toes warm.



Our Canadian friends know exactly where they can do so best. A Greater Yellowlegs rediscovering Aruba's Bubali Wetlands.

Cabochon

In its living form of so much more value than any gemstone. Aruba's smallest and most master of flight. A top pollinator. A hovering Blenchi inspecting the human who just entered his territory.

English: Blue-tailed Emerald (male) Dutch: Blauwstaartsmaragdkolibrie (mannetje). Aruba's to enjoy. Aruba's to protect. ☐

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Today we celebrate King's Day!
In honor of the king's birthday



(Oranjestad)—For the past 11 years on April 27th, the Dutch Kingdom celebrates the king's birthday. As an autonomous nation within the kingdom, Aruba also joins in on the celebration, honoring the king on this national holiday through different festivities on the island.

Last year in January, the Royal Family went on tour visiting all the Caribbean islands within the Dutch Kingdom, and Aruba was no exception. During this visit, the Royal Family had a busy itinerary that started with a morning march through the main road of Oranjestad, a meeting with the Aruban government, and a tour of the different festivities planned for the Royal Family over the course of two days. Last year was also the first year that the Crown Princess Amalia participated in the royal protocol, having the chance to meet with the locals and be acquainted with the island.

Princess Beatrix' last visit as the queen

Princess Beatrix's last visit to Aruba as queen was on October 28th, 2011. Accompanying her was then Prince Willem-Alexander and his wife, Princess Maxima. The protocol for this visit was similar to that of today; the royal were greeted by a crowd of locals and governments officials on the streets of downtown Oranjestad.

The princess' first visit was in 1958, during the reign of her mother, the then Queen Juliana who ruled from 1948 to 1980.



Queen Juliana unveils mother's statue (1955)

During the reign of King Willem-Alexander's grandmother, the then Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, the monarch visited Aruba in October of 1955. This visit was especially important, as it was the first time that a reigning monarch has paid a visit to the island. Juliana's prior visit to Aruba was in 1944, when she was still a Crown Princess.

Queen Juliana's visit had an important goal: She was there to unveil the statue of her mother and monarch before her, Queen Wilhelmina. The Statue was erected in

what is now known as Wilhelmina Park next to the Renaissance Market Place. □



Activities you should check out today for King's

- **King's Day MTB Madness Race**
4pm @ Rancho Las Piedras Aruba
- **Kids Market**
4pm-8pm @ YMCA San Nicolas
- **Ban Caya event in San Nicolas**
4pm-8pm around YMCA/Joe Laveist Stadium
- **King's Day Festival**
12pm-8pm @ Hoya
- **King's Day Beach Party**
12pm-10pm @Surfside (in front of Talk of the Town)
- **King's Party**
7pm-2:30am @ SIP (Kerstraat, Oranjestad)
- **King's Night Street Fair**
6pm-12am @ mainstreet San Nicolas
- **"Ban hisa fli" (kite flying)**
8am @ Centro di Bario Playa Abao
- **Charity Dog Walk and Run**
8am @ Eagle Kids Park

Get to know our king and his role as monarch

(Oranjestad)—Today, our island has the great honor of celebrating King Willem-Alexander. We invite you to learn a bit more about the king and his role as the current monarch.

Willem-Alexander is the first King of the Netherlands since the death of his great-great-grandfather William III in 1890. On April 20, 2013, Willem-Alexander's inauguration took place at the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. Willem-Alexander ascended the throne immediately after the abdication of his mother, Queen Beatrix, on the same day.

Willem-Alexander was born in Utrecht as the eldest son of Princess Beatrix and diplomat Claus van Amsberg. He became the Prince of Orange as the heir apparent upon his mother's accession to the throne on April 30, 1980.

In 2017, Willem-Alexander surprised the public when it was revealed that for 21 years, King Willem-Alexander had been flying as a co-pilot incognito, twice a month, while his passengers were unaware, as reported by a Dutch newspaper. In 2013, Willem-Alexander was commemorated as the king of the Netherlands, yet his role as a co-pilot continued. "I just find flying simply fantastic," he told De Telegraaf.

Under the constitution, the king, along with the ministers, forms the government. The king represents the Kingdom of the Netherlands at home and abroad. In addition to his formal duties, King Willem-

Alexander works in the interests of the Dutch people.

As head of state, it is the king's duty to unify, represent, and encourage the people.

The ministers, not the monarch, are responsible for government actions, and the ministers are accountable to Parliament for what they do and say. The ministers, together forming the cabinet, are responsible for decision-making.

The king holds weekly meetings with the prime minister, regularly meets with ministers and state secretaries, signs all laws and royal decrees (KB), and ratifies international treaties as part of the government. At the State Opening of Parliament on the third Tuesday of September, he delivers his Throne Speech, in which the government announces its plans for the upcoming parliamentary year.

The constitution requires the monarch to appoint, dismiss, and swear in all ministers and state secretaries. In view of this constitutional role, and upon the request of Parliament, the king may be kept informed of all developments in the formation process.



The monarch is officially the president of the Council of State, a historic role that is purely symbolic in nature. The Council of State provides the government and Parliament with independent advice on legislation and governance and also serves as the highest administrative court in the country. In addition to the plenary meetings attended by the king, the Council of State consists of an Administrative Jurisdiction Division and an Advisory Division, whose meetings do not involve the king. Accordingly, the king is not involved in practice in the two main areas of activity of the Council. The vice-president is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Council of State and presides over its meetings.

Positions held by King Willem-Alexander since April 30, 2013: President of the Council of State; Member of the Board of the Archives of the House of Or-

ange-Nassau Foundation; Member of the Board of the Crown Property Trust; Member of the Board of the Royal Gifts Trust.

Honorary positions held by Willem-Alexander since April 30, 2013: Patron of the Oranje Fonds (together with Queen Maxima); Patron of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences; Patron of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation; Patron of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW); Patron of the Royal Netherlands Association of Military Order Knights; Patron of the Dutch Literature Society; Patron of the Bible Society of the Netherlands; Patron of the Netherlands Association for Trade and Industry ('de Maatschappij'); Patron of the Association of Dutch Nobility; Patron of the War Graves Foundation; Patron of the Historical Archery Association of Limburg; Patron of the Historical Association Orange-Nassau (museum); Honorary Member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).



Source: royal-house.nl



Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Playa Linda Beach Resort!



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Goodwill Ambassador of Aruba. The honoree was respectively honored with a certificate acknowledging her years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Goodwill Ambassador
Ms. Patricia Camire from Maine, United States.

Distinguished Visitor

Mr. Kevin Cole & Mrs. Renee Cole from New York, United States. Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Playa Linda Beach Resort bestowed the certificate to the honoree, presented her with memorable gifts, and thanked her for choosing Aruba as her best-loved vacation destination, as her home away from home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honoree was:

- Aruba's hospitality.
- "Weather".
- Aruba's Restaurant options.
- "The feeling of safety".
- "Love Playa Linda".
- Aruba's beautiful people.
- "Relaxation".
- Aruba's sun, sand and sea.
- "Friends & Family time".

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island" ☐

Episode CXXI -121 Yuca an Amerindian cultural heritage

NOORD - In times of Conquest there was a saying widely used in popular Cuban slang taken from the colonizers, "In the absence of bread, casaba." With this expression we can already have an idea of the importance of yuca in daily life.

Before continuing I want to quote the words of a famous Dominican, Geo Ripley, a good friend who is a renowned multimedia artist and cultural advocate who, referring to our guest star of this new episode, mentioning - "The Cassava is an Amerindian cultural patrimony which has perpetuated in time and space till our days, and a symbol for us, Islanders of this Caribbean Sea, this crop which always had unified us and never had separated us."

Cassava or yuca is a root vegetable that can be



grinded in to flour for the elaboration of tortillas, cut in to slices as chips, fried or in stews, while in other cultures it is even used as medicine. Cassava is used for tiredness, dehydration in people with diarrhea, sepsis, and to induce labor, yet there is no scientific evidence to support these claims.

The basic food for many world rural families of low income and of meager existence which has transcended its original area of cultivation as many of the new world crops which has been considered a valuable protein source for generations of Amerindian communities. The Yuca forms part of the selection

of roots and tubers that the Cubans commonly denominate as 'viandas.' In Aruba, our native farmers also planted and ate this root in many ways. As cassava bread or cachapas, the flour was mixed with water in to a mash and fried on a hot iron or clay plate while grounded it was used as starch for fabrics.

The Cassave plant appears to have its origins in Brazil and Paraguay and especially around the Amazon and Orinoco river basins. This important plant has been spread by Amerindians throughout tropical areas of South, Central America and the Caribbean islands long before the arrival of the Europeans and to be considered one of the most recurrent Caribbean indigenous foods besides Corn predominated among Siboneyes, Caquetios and Taínos, who were engaged in harvesting and agricultural activities, respectively. This was and still is the first typical meal among Caribbean nations – a substitute for the basic wheat bread diet.

Did you say that you love Aruba its origins and cultural heritage? Than this private encounter with our columnist anthropologist is just as you. Sessions created in a gorgeous setting for visitor with special interests. Appointment is required. etniana03@gmail.com or WhatsApp us 297 592 2702. ☐



Article by: Etnia Nativa

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A brief history of the California Light House

(Oranjestad)—At the furthest western point of the island, there lies the tallest structure on the island: The California Light House. Standing on top of a limestone cliff, this lighthouse oversees the entire island, offering one of few best views of the island and the surrounding sea. It is also one of the few monuments that hold a rich history.

The lighthouse was constructed in between 1914-1916, and its first keeper was a young trained lighthouse keeper from Curacao names Jacob Jacobs. Mr. Frederico Fingal was the last man to have occupied this position until 1962. Though his son, Mr. Romulo Fingal did not continue in his father's footsteps, he does have a special connection to the lighthouse. He sat down with our reporter and shared a bit of its history.

As Mr. Fingal explains, "In 1915, cargo donkeys were hired from Figaroa di Noord to help build the Lighthouse at Westpunt. The donkeys had to walk along the beach all the way to Westpunt carrying the cargo, poles, cement, and all these things. At that time, it was a difficult task until Aruba got its first truck. These things reflect how people could have accomplished this tremendous job with so little." Mr. Fingal said, "At that time, it wasn't a place for people to work. It was very challenging because it was full of goats and donkeys, and it was very isolated. There were no hotels or roads to get there. There was only a donkey trail. Those were



the only means of transportation." Mr. Fingal continues, "In 1939, I was born in the lighthouse, and my father was the last lighthouse keeper until he retired in 1962. After that, they removed the power cables all the way to the top. According to the story, we couldn't have the light ourselves because they dismantled it, and after many years, I heard that it is in a train museum in San Nicolas, where we found this very special lens that, when the light shines through it, it reaches 30

kilometers out to sea." Mr. Fingal told our reporter.

The lighthouse has a long and very interesting history. The reason why the lighthouse was built, according to Mr. Fingal, dates back to the day when the cargo ship S.S. California sank because of the lack of light. In 1913, Aruba made a request to Curacao to build a Lighthouse at Westpunt, and the governor of Curacao responded to Aruba to come back in 1915 with a well-detailed plan. "During the First World War from 1914 to 1918, they had to wait for the light to be transported to Aruba because it was manufactured in France. At that time, there was no electricity, and the light was very interesting because it rotated with a kerosene lamp that planes used; clean kerosene," Mr. Fingal said.

Mr. Fingal discovered something very interesting about the lighthouse after much research was documented in his book 'History of the Lighthouse at Westpunt.' He found many details: "I found out that the height of the lighthouse was due to the absence of electricity. There was also the presence of coral. There is a long steel cable from where the light is, and under the light, at the highest point, there is a hanging weight, a sort of pendulum that swings like that, with a weight that measures about 1 meter by 30 centimeters wide, which is a block of solid iron

attached to a cable. When you release it upwards, it comes down, and the weight that comes down pulls it up, gradually. And while it comes down, the same weight that is descending causes many small wheels to turn in the opposite direction. The Lighthouse rotates from 6 pm in the evening, when the sun sets, until 6 am in the morning. During the entire night, the light shines on the lantern, it goes down 24 meters, and the Lighthouse is 30 meters high. It is designed not to collapse," Mr. Fingal explains.

Mr. Fingal further explains that in one night, the lighthouse rotates 4,320 times and consumes one gallon of kerosene for the whole operation. "At that time, the kerosene was supplied from the Lago refinery. Every day it was brought down, and to start the light again, they had to lift the weight up, so our job as children was to crank it and raise the weight back up in the evening when the light stuck, they would take it down again, and the light stayed down. That's how it worked for a very long time," Mr. Fingal explains.

Thanks to the Monument Fund Aruba, which worked hard and is currently in charge of the Lighthouse, Mr. Fingal is very happy with its preservation, along with all the renovations that have taken place. He hopes that the story of the lighthouse will continue to live on for future generations. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 40 News item

1 Innocent ones 41 Fresh 42 Takes ten

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11 Dodge

12 Modify

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14 Complete

15 Bays

17 Pitcher's stat

18 Jargon suffix

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23 Mario Puzo book

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25 Hushed

27 Hosp. sections

30 Army bigwig

31 Fellows

32 Lowly worker

33 Ornate style

35 "House-boat" star

38 Poll goer

39 Kitchen come-on

DOWN

1 Quail

groups

2 Slugger Pete

3 Printer's dot

4 Keeness

5 Upholstery protector

6 Diamond club

7 Hoopla

8 Hidden

9 Athens rival

10 Heavens supporter

Spain

vote

16 Discus-

sion

20 Steak-

house

21 Direction

suffix

24 Hearty

quaff

25 Lady of

Spain

vote

26 Overtures

27 Hams

it up

28 New

29 Derisive

sounds

30 Charity

dos

34 Inlet

36 Print units

37 Opposing

vote

4-27

AXYDLBAAXR

is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used

for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters,

apostrophes, the length and formation of the words

are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-27

CRYPTOQUOTE

SO WYDCD'E J YDJZDP OMC

LD, S'L EHCD SW YJE J

VDJFY JWWJFYDU WM SW.

— QSLLG VHOODWW

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: AIM FOR THE

HIGHEST CLOUD SO THAT IF YOU MISS IT,

YOU WILL HIT A LOFTY MOUNTAIN. — MAORI

PROVERB

S	O	L	I	D	M	A	G	M	A
A	N	O	D	E	A	D	I	O	S
G	A	B	L	E	C	H	A	L	K
L	E	D	A	E	N	D	S		
T	H	O	R	P	O	R	T		
O	I	L	D	E	T	E	S	T	S
E	L	L	I	E	I	D	E	A	L
S	L	Y	N	E	S	S	Q	U	O
P	A	P	A	C	U	T	E		
S	N	I	P	T	R	I	O		
T	U	N	I	S	A	R	I	A	S
A	D	E	L	E	S	C	A	R	E
B	E	S	E	T	H	A	S	T	E

Yesterday's answer

Cruise ship Schedule: Apr 22 - Apr 30 2024

TUE	30	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	20.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
		CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	I	1

Cruise ship Schedule: May 01 - May 22 2024

TUE	07	CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	14	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
WED	15	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	21	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	C	1
WED	22	CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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Long flu season winds down in U.S.



A sign for flu vaccination is displayed outside of a grocery store in Glenview, Ill., Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024.

By **MIKE STOBBE**
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. flu season appears to be over. It was long, but it wasn't unusually severe. Last week, for the third straight week, medical visits for flu-like illnesses dipped below the threshold for what's counted as an active flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday. Other indicators, like hospitalizations and patient testing, also show low and declining activity. No state is reporting a high amount of flu activity. Only New England is seeing the kind of patient traffic associated with an active flu season right now, but even there flu impact is considered modest.

Since the beginning of October, there have been at least 34 million illnesses, 380,000 hospitalizations and 24,000 deaths from flu, according to CDC estimates. The agency said 148 children have died of flu.

CDC officials called that a "moderate" flu season, an assessment shared by other doctors.

Even at the peak, "we felt strained but never over-capacitated" said Dr. Jay Varkey, infectious disease physician at Atlanta's Em-

ory University Hospital.

"It felt more like a traditional respiratory virus season than when we had massive upswings of COVID confounding it," he added.

For much of the season, most illnesses were attributed to a milder flu strain, and one that officials say was well matched to the seasonal flu vaccines. Preliminary data presented in February suggested the vaccines were around 40% effective in preventing adults from getting sick enough from the flu that they had to go to a doctor's office, clinic or hospi-

tal.

COVID-19 illnesses seem to have peaked at around the same time as flu. So too did illnesses caused by another respiratory virus, RSV. CDC data indicates coronavirus-caused hospitalizations haven't hit the same levels they did at the same point during the last three winters. Earlier this year, COVID-19 was putting more people in the hospital than flu. But right now the hospitalization rates are about the same, CDC data shows.

Although the season wasn't particularly bad, it

was long and springtime upticks in flu are always possible.

COVID-19 scrambled the ways health officials track respiratory viruses.

The agency used to count the number of weeks of elevated visits to doctor's office for flu-like symptoms, but COVID-19's flu-like symptoms muddled that up. Now, the agency focuses on the number of weeks that a high percentage of specimens tested positive for flu.

Under the new measure, the 2023-24 flu season was 21 weeks long. □

Associated Press



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SUND 5 MAY + 2 JUNE
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every Saturday +
KINGSDAY 27 April
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HEALTH

DOCTOR ON DUTY

Oranjestad

Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel. 524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:

Central : Tel. 585 1965

San Nicolas:

San Nicolas: Tel. 584 5712

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051

Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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These apps allow workers to get paid between paychecks. Experts say there are steep costs

By CORA LEWIS
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Anna Branch, 37, had her hours at work reduced in 2019, she suddenly noticed ads for an app called EarnIn.

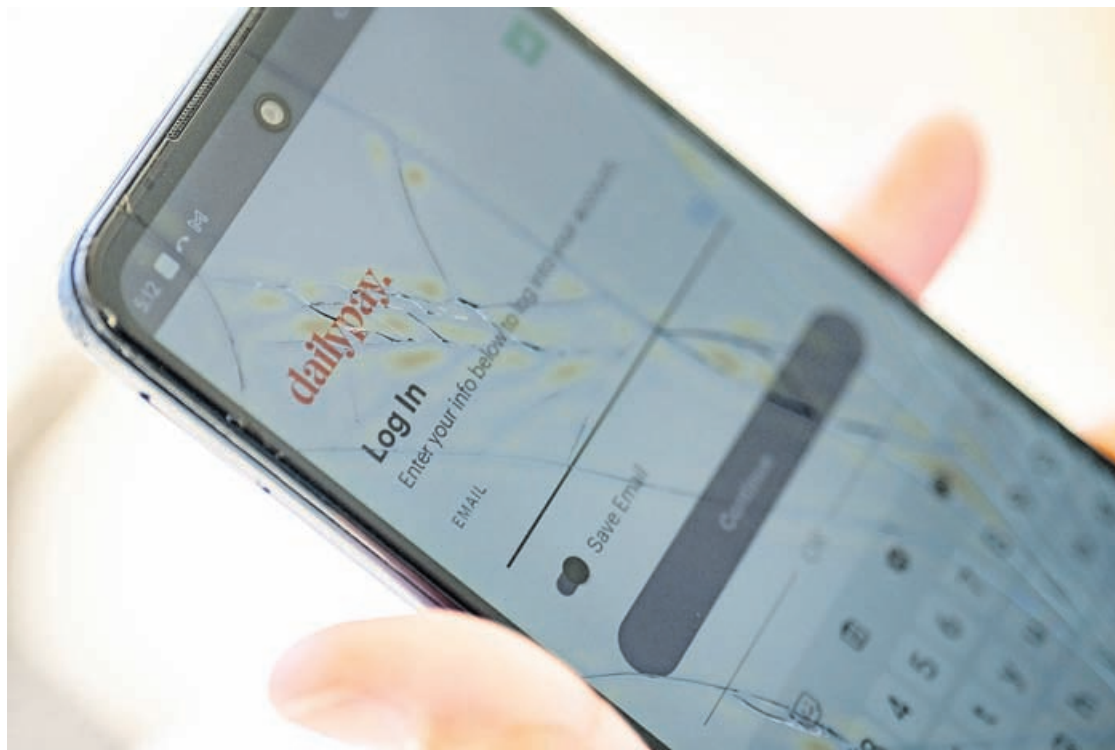
"You know how they get you the algorithms like they're reading your mind," Branch said. "The ad said I could get up to \$100 this week and repay it in my next pay period."

Branch, who was working as an administrative assistant in Charleston, South Carolina, downloaded the app and added the suggested "tip." The cash helped her cover expenses until payday, when the app debited the borrowed \$100, plus \$14 for tip. Five years later, Branch said she still uses the app, as often as once a month.

EarnIn is one of more than a dozen companies that provide this service, billed as Earned Wage Access. The apps extend small short-term loans to workers in between paychecks so they can pay bills and meet everyday needs. On payday, the user repays the money out of their wages. Between 2018 and 2020, transaction volume tripled from \$3.2 billion to \$9.5 billion, according to Datos Insights.

While Earned Wage Access apps have been around for over a decade, the pandemic and its aftermath boosted their popularity. Some apps have approachable human names like Dave, Clio, Albert, and Brigit while others suggest financial freedom: Empower, FloatMe, FlexWage, Rain. The typical user earns less than \$50,000 a year, according to the Government Accountability Office, and has experienced the pinch of two years of high inflation.

Proponents of the apps say they help people living paycheck to paycheck manage their finances and avoid the need for more onerous options, such as payday loans or overdrawing a bank account. But



Sheri Wilkins talks about her experience using the DailyPay app outside of the clubhouse at her apartment complex in College Station, Texas on Tuesday, March 26, 2024.

some analysts, consumer advocates and lawmakers say the apps are actually payday loans in a new tech wrapper, and that they can trap users in an endless cycle of borrowing that depletes their earnings.

Critics also say the costs of the loans are not always transparent. Many charge monthly subscription fees and most charge mandatory fees for instant transfers of funds, though there is typically a no-cost option to receive funds in one to three business days. The average APR for a loan repaid in seven to 14 days was 367%, a rate comparable to payday lending, according to a report from the Center for Responsible Lending.

Muddying the waters is the fact that some employers have integrated Earned Wage Access apps into their payroll, with different costs, models, and fee structures. Amazon and Walmart, for example, do not always charge employees for early access to earned wages outside of regular pay periods.

"THEY GET YOU HOOKED"

Sheri Wilkins, 60, who works as a home health aide in College Station, Texas, said she's used the apps since 2020, and that she feels

"dependent on the money."

The health care contractor that employs Wilkins offers DailyPay, and Wilkins typically uses the app to transfer the amount of that day's wages (\$10.60 an hour) twice a day once after each of her two shifts, for which she's paid separately. Each time, she pays a \$3.49 fee, for a total of \$7 a day. At \$35 a week, the app eats up more than three hours of her pay weekly, or a-day-and-a-half's work per month.

"They get you hooked on having that money," Wilkins said. "It's fine and great to have it to buy groceries and cigarettes but when it comes time to have your paycheck, it's only \$50-\$60."

Wilkins said she was not aware the app had a free option, which would transfer the money in one to three days. She said the app always directed her to the instant transfer option. A spokesperson for DailyPay said in a statement that the app offers two options with no fees to most users and a third with what they described as a "small ATM-like fee."

Matt Bahl, who researches workplace issues for the Financial Health Net-

work, said the growth of the Earned Wage Access industry is a symptom of widespread financial insecurity.

"It's meant to help solve short-term liquidity challenges," he said. "But if those challenges are the result of insufficient income, it won't solve them. You can't 'tech' your way out of material deficits."

THE TIPS

Andrew Lewis, 32, who lives in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, said he uses EarnIn, in part to meet unexpected expenses. Lewis works as a process technician for an electronics manufacturing company, and said he sometimes uses the app as often as every week, for gas money or something his toddler or wife needs.

Lewis usually pays the "tips" the apps suggest, he said, but he doesn't "like them that much," in part because of the messaging.

"Tips keep us running for millions of members like you," EarnIn's in-app copy reads.

The company says it uses tips to maintain a no-fee option.

"I feel a little guilty because of how they make it sound," Lewis said.

In 2021, the California Department of Financial Pro-

tection and Innovation found "users often feel compelled to leave (tips) due to applied pressure tactics like... claiming tips are used to support other vulnerable consumers or for charitable purposes."

In its report, the department found that borrowers who use Earned Wage Access take out an average of 36 loans a year. On 5.8 million transactions, 73% of consumers paid a "tip," at \$4.09 per tip on average. On three dozen loans, that's \$147 annually in tips alone.

CONVENIENCE AND NO CREDIT CHECK

Penny Lee, head of the Financial Technology Association, an industry group, says more people are turning to Earned Wage Access as a convenience that allows them to make up for the "disconnect between what the consumer needs to be able to spend ... and their pay cycle."

Like Buy Now, Pay Later loans, the apps don't run credit checks and bill themselves as interest-free. Unlike payday loans or auto title loans, where borrowers pledge their vehicles as collateral, users of the apps don't face balloon payments, black marks on their credit reports, or the possibility of losing their car if they fail to pay. Supporters also say the apps don't sue or send collectors after unpaid debts.

The FTA says the average cost per use of an Earned Wage Access app is between \$2.59 and \$6.27. The companies say the charges are comparable to ATM fees and cheaper than overdraft fees, which people incur if they don't have enough money left in a checking account to cover a bill before payday. The average overdraft fee is more than \$25 and can be as high as \$36.

However, in its report, the Center for Responsible Lending found that users of the apps experienced a 56% increase in checking account overdrafts. □

Defending champs Alcaraz and Sabalenka win opening matches at Madrid Open

MADRID (AP) — Carlos Alcaraz didn't need to put his tender right arm to the test to ease to a victory in his opening match at the Madrid Open on Friday. The two-time defending champion was playing for the first time in nearly a month after his injured arm ruled him out of Monte Carlo and Barcelona. And after doubting this week he would be good to go in Spain's capital, Alcaraz admitted he could afford to hold up just a bit in a 6-2, 6-1 win over Alexander Shevchenko.

"I didn't hit my forehand 100%. I hit it softer than I used to hit it, but I think it helped me, you know, to, let's say, stay relaxed," Alcaraz said. "But the first thing that I was thinking about when I was stepping on the court is to stay healthy."

"I was really happy to not feel anything in the forearm, and after that I could increase my intensity a bit. It was great for me this match." Defending women's champion Aryna Sabalenka faced tougher resistance in her opening match while beating Magda Linette 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 on the Caja Magica clay.

This was Alcaraz's first match since the Miami Open quarterfinals nearly



Carlos Alcaraz, of Spain, returns the ball to Alexander Shevchenko, of Kazakhstan, during the Mutua Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid, Friday, April 26, 2024.

one month ago. Madrid is the Spaniard's first appearance on the European clay court swing he struggled in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro in February as he aims to win his first French Open title next month.

"Right now I'm thinking to be better or get better every day, and I'm thinking to be closer to my 100% here in Madrid," the two-time major champion said. "Let's see how it's going to be the next few weeks. But the main thing is to be

ready for next tournament and obviously to Roland Garros."

In Madrid, the third-ranked Alcaraz is seeded second behind Jannik Sinner and both enjoyed first-round byes. Alcaraz played with a compression sleeve on his right arm from his wrist up past his elbow. But he looked pretty much like the same aggressive player who has dominated here for the past two years and given Spanish tennis fans hope there is life after Ra-

fael Nadal.

Alcaraz broke Shevchenko's serve four times and will next face Thiago Seyboth Wild of Brazil.

Seyboth Wild upset Daniil Medvedev at last year's French Open and should offer a stiffer challenge to Alcaraz in the round of 32. Seventh-seeded Andrey Rublev snapped a four-game losing streak by defeating Facundo Bagnis 6-1, 6-4. Rublev's last win came at Indian Wells in March.

Tommy Paul got past qualifier Lukas Klein 6-7 (5), 6-1, 6-4 in his first clay match of the season after missing Monte Carlo due to injury. Eighth-seeded Hubert Hurkacz beat Jack Draper 6-1, 7-5, while Denis Shapovalov, Francisco Cerundolo, Alejandro Davidovich, Daniel Altmaier, and Sebastian Baez also moved on.

SABALENKA'S SLOW START

The second-ranked Sabalenka struggled with her serve at times against Linette, but the two-time Australian Open winner struck her 10th ace on match point.

Sabalenka got some help from the net to get a key break and go up 5-3 in the third set when Linette was unable to reach a shot by the Belarusian that clipped the top of the tape.

Sabalenka has either won it all in Madrid as she did in 2021 and last year, or gone out in the first round as she did in 2018, 2019 and 2022. "Hopefully it's going to be a good sign and I will keep it like that," she said. "I either lose in the first or I win (the title)." Fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina beat Lucia Bronzetti 6-4, 6-3 to take her season-leading win haul to 27 as she seeks her fourth title of 2024. □

Associated Press

76ers All-Star center Joel Embiid says he has Bell's palsy

By **DAN GELSTON**
AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Philadelphia 76ers All-Star center Joel Embiid has been diagnosed with Bell's palsy, a form of facial paralysis he says has affected him since before the play-in tournament.

Embiid wore sunglasses to the podium after he scored 50 points in the Sixers' Game 3 win over the New York Knicks and said he's dealt with various symptoms such as blurred vision and dry eyes.

Embiid said he first started noticing the affliction about a "day or two" before the Sixers played the Miami Heat on April 17 in the play-

in tournament. Embiid had 23 points and 15 rebounds in the win that sent the Sixers to the playoffs.

Embiid complained of migraines but "thought it was nothing" before he finally notified doctors he wasn't feeling well.

"My body was just, I was just not feeling it," Embiid said. "Yes, it's pretty annoying. My left side of my face, my mouth and my eye. It's been tough. But I'm not a quitter. I'm going to keep fighting through anything. It's unfortunate, that's the way I look at it. But it's not an excuse. I've got to keep pushing."

Last season's NBA MVP, Embiid was 13 of 19 from the

floor, made 19 of 21 free throws and hit five 3-pointers in Game 3.

The Knicks lead the series 2-1 and Game 4 is Sunday in Philadelphia.

Embiid had been wearing sunglasses throughout the series and conducted a Game 2 postgame interview with his head down in front of his locker to hide his symptoms.

Embiid said he has no timetable on how long it may take to recover from Bell's palsy.

"It hasn't really necessarily gotten better," he said. "With the conversations that I've had, it could be weeks, it could be months. I just hope that it stays like

this. I've got a beautiful face. I don't like when my mouth is looking the other

way. Unfortunate situation but everything happens for a reason." □



Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid speaks during a news conference after Game 3 in an NBA basketball first-round playoff series against the New York Knicks, Thursday, April 25, 2024, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

MLB presence in Mexico goes beyond just hosting another regular-season series

By **CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ**

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — When the Houston Astros take on the Colorado Rockies this weekend, it will be the seventh regular-season series played in Mexico. Major League Baseball's presence in the country, however, goes far beyond that. Mexico became one of only six countries in the world with an MLB office in 2016. For Rodrigo Fernandez, the head of the organization south of the border, the regular-season series may be the biggest event, but it's far from the only one held in the country. Among those, the MLB office runs a program



Houston Astros team mascot Orbit and fans, pose for a photo backdropped by the Monument to the Revolution in Mexico City, Thursday, April 25, 2024.

Associated Press

and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The office is inside a luxury tower adjacent to the upscale Artz Pedregal shopping mall in the southern part of the city. Even though Fernandez's position remains the same, some of the goals from MLB in Mexico have changed. In 2016, MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred said he wanted to see if Mexico could be a potential site for expansion. But a year ago, Manfred said he's "never been close to the idea of Mexico as an expansion opportunity."

"Commissioner Manfred has a commitment and very high interest in Mexico, however there are several factors that have made us change our strategies and now solidifying the local leagues is the main step for us," Fernandez said.

The MLB office in Mexico already works closely with the Mexican baseball federation and they are trying to forge a closer relationship with the Mexican Baseball League, led by league president Horacio de la Vega.

Since de la Vega took over in 2021, the league has seen increased attendance at stadiums, the games are broadcast on national TV and on streaming services. That has helped grow the sport's popularity among a new generation of fans.

"I think (fan attendance) has increased, before there were a lot of old people in the park," 63-year-old fan Carlos Hernandez said before a game between the Diablos Rojos and Tigres in Mexico City. "And now there are more fans, especially young ones."

According to Othon Diaz, the Diablos Rojos president, nine years ago 53% of the team's fans were 55 years or older and now 74% of them are under 45. Also, they averaged 3,000 fans per game and now it's up to 11,000. For some of those hard-core fans, having an MLB regular-season series is nice, but only for those who can afford it. □

called First Pitch to promote the game among kids. Another is the MLB Cup, a nation-wide tournament for 11 and 12 year olds that recently finished its fifth championship.

"For us (the series) is the cherry on top of the cake because we have many activities through the year," Fernandez told The Associated Press. "The MLB Cup is broadcasted by ESPN and is the biggest tournament of its kind in Mexico. Those kids are Mexico's future."

The MLB office in Mexico, alongside the Mexican baseball federation, held the tournament with 28 teams. The finals were played in Mexico City.

"We want to send the message to kids that we are interested in them playing baseball. Many of them will probably end up being signed by the Mexican Baseball League, but also, they are going to play for the national team in their age group," Fernandez said.

Fernandez has been the only director of the office since its creation in 2016. Before taking over, he worked as general manager of operations for World Wrestling Entertainment for Mexico and Latin America. Besides Mexico, Major League Baseball has offices in London, Tokyo, Beijing

Long Live the King

HAPPY

King's Day

On behalf of

ARUBA Aruba Tourism Authority